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White House sidelines 160 National Security Council staffers, aligning the team with Trump's agenda

By **ZEKE MILLER and AAMER MADHANI**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's national security adviser has sidelined about 160 National Security Council staffers, telling them to work from home while the administration reviews staffing and tries to align it with Trump's agenda, administration officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday. The career government employees, commonly referred to as detailees, were summoned on Wednesday to an all-staff call in which they were told that they'll be expected to be available to the NSC's senior directors but would not



Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., speaks during a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Capitol Hill, Feb. 29, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

Trump and Waltz would like to see as part of the NSC once the review is completed.

Officials said that they have already begun bringing detailees from agencies with expertise that the new administration values, including some who had served during the first Trump administration.

Some directors have already made decisions to inform detailees they will be sent back to the federal agencies they were on loan from. For example, multiple holdover detailees assigned to counterterrorism directorate were told on Tuesday that their assignment was being cut short and that they will be sent back to their home agencies, according to two people familiar with the move who were not authorized to comment publicly.

At least some holdover detailees sent home Wednesday had their White House emails turned off soon after the all-staff call ended, but they were told to remain reachable on their personal cellphones.

"National Security Advisor Mike Waltz promised and authorized a full review of NSC personnel," White House National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes said in a statement. "It is entirely appropriate for Mr. Waltz to ensure NSC personnel are committed to implementing President Trump's America First agenda to protect our national security and wisely use the tax dollars of America's working men and women. Since 12:01 pm on Monday personnel reviews and decisions based on the evaluations are being made."

The dozens of NSC staff members affected by the decision are largely subject matter experts who had been loaned to the White House by federal agencies such as the State Department, the FBI and the CIA for temporary duty that typically lasts one to two years. □




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need to report to the White House. The NSC, a White House arm, provides national security and foreign policy advice to the president.

Trump, a Republican, is sidelining these nonpolitical subject matter experts on topics that range from counterterrorism to global climate policy at a time when the U.S. is grappling with a disparate set of complicated foreign policy matters, including conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. Such structuring could make new policy experts brought in to the NSC less likely to speak up about policy differences and concerns.

Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, had signaled before Inauguration Day that he would look to move holdover civil servants who worked in the NSC during President Joe Biden's administration back to their home agencies. That's meant to ensure the council is staffed by those who support Trump's agenda.

By the end of the review, Waltz will look to have a "more efficient, flatter" NSC, one official said. The officials declined to comment on the ultimate number of personnel nonpolitical detailees as well as political appointees that

EU needs to end its military dependency on the U.S. and arm itself 'to survive,' says Tusk

By **LORNE COOK**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union cannot rely on the United States to defend it and must increase military spending and security preparedness to help Ukraine and deter Russia from targeting any more of its neighbors, top EU officials warned on Wednesday. "Ask not of America what it can do for our security. Ask yourselves what we can do for our own security," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, whose country holds the EU presidency, said, paraphrasing a quote from U.S. President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961.

In an address to EU lawmakers, Tusk urged the 27-nation bloc to "take control" of its own security and to identify its weaknesses. "If Europe is to survive, it must be armed," he said. Anxiety is mounting that U.S. President Donald Trump might seek to quickly end the war in talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on terms that are unfavorable to Ukraine, or once again refuse to defend European allies who do not boost their military



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk delivers his speech during the presentation of the programme of activities of the Polish Presidency, at the European Parliament, Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025 in Strasbourg, eastern France.

Associated Press

budgets.

"We need to believe again in our power," Tusk told the assembly, in Strasbourg, France. "We are strong, we are equal to the greatest powers in the world. The only thing we have to do is believe in it."

Tusk said that his country is spending close to 5% of its gross domestic product on its defense budget, more than any NATO ally including the United States. He urged his European partners to match that rate

at least until Russia backs down.

"It is today that we need to radically increase our defense spending (but) not forever and ever."

In Brussels, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas warned of the dangers that Russia already poses, laying out a list of acts of sabotage, cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns and electronic GPS jamming that she accuses Moscow of underwriting. "Many of our national intelligence agencies are giving us the information that Russia could test the EU's readiness to defend itself in 3 to 5 years," she said at a European Defense Agency gathering. □

Colombia reactivates arrest orders for top rebels blamed for deadly violence in cocaine turf war

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombia's government is reactivating arrest orders for the top leadership of the nation's largest rebel group following attacks on civilians as part of a deadly turf war with dissident guerrillas from another armed group for control of a coca-growing region bordering Venezuela.

President Gustavo Petro's leftist government in 2022 suspended warrants against top commanders of the National Liberation Army, or ELN, as part of an effort to coax the 60-year-old insurgency into a peace deal. Among the 31 rebel leaders whose arrest was ordered Wednesday by the chief prosecutor's office is Pablo Beltrán, the lead ELN negotiator in those halting peace talks, as well as the group's top military commander, best known by his alias, Antonio García.

Petro himself a former member of the M-19 guerrilla group has also suspended the peace talks in response to the violence. □

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(Oranjestad)—Up to grab an early dinner after a day of shopping or cruising? Take advantage of L'Avenue's Early Bird Special, and experience their innovative twist of traditional Belgian cuisine!

Located in a cozy nook at The Cove Mall—a short walking distance from the Holiday Inn and Paseo Herencia, this Belgian and French bistro offers a delicious and rich menu available through lunch and dinner from 11am to 10pm. Enjoy your lunch and/or dinner in a cool, air-conditioned interior area of the res-

taurant, accompanied by the warm lights and chic design that emphasizes the restaurant's laid-back, yet sophisticated ambience.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even mussels and rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience!



But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$29.50 per

guest, which includes a selection of their fine in-house wine.

L'Avenue honors and takes pride in serving the traditional Belgian and French flavors, but does not shy away from offering a flexible menu for their guests' needs. That's right, L'Avenue also offers to cater for their guests' dietary restrictions, making sure that each guest gets well taken care of!

More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail info@lavenuearuba.com, or visit their website at lavenuearuba.com □



(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building "Cocolishi", is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually referring to two separate build-

Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!

ings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower. That's right, the iconic 5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called "Willem III Toren". Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to protect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable characters roaming the Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era).

Over the years, both the fort and the tower

had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cultural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the commercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offering a glance into how the social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm. □

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.

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Aruban snacks and where to find them

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, includ-



ing on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find pastechis and krokets at local bakeries and snack shops, like Bright Bakery in Piedra Plat, Huchada in Santa Cruz or Pastechi House in the city center. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing

"batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batido shops next to the flea markets downtown, or if you're on your way to San Nicolas, at Mauchi Smoothies and Juice Bar in Savaneta (located at the side of the main road).

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:

1. Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby



Beach.

2. Along the main road next to the airport field.
3. At the California Light House.
4. At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them! □

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com

Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children



play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-

rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □



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By THOMAS JOSEPH

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1-23

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-23

CRYPTOQUOTE

CL C RZXXBM TCMLQ YXB
VGYOIR BCL NZVBIQ JOL XYL
LYY NBII, CXR LCID NBII JOL
XYL LYY NZVBIQ. — N.

VYWBMVBL WCOEGCW

Cryptoquote: I WONDER IF THE
SNOW LOVES THE TREES AND FIELDS THAT IT
KISSES THEM SO GENTLY? — LEWIS CARROLL



Detroit Lions defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn watches during warmups before an NFL football divisional playoff game against the Washington Commanders, Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, in Detroit. Associated Press

Assistant coaches say interviewing during the NFL playoffs isn't a distraction

By ROB MAADDI
AP Pro Football Writer

Only the coordinators who interviewed for head coaching jobs before playoff games know if those conversations with other teams were a distraction.

It won't stop people from speculating about it.

The NFL's hiring process became a hot topic after the Detroit Lions were knocked out of the playoffs. The Lions went 15-2 and earned the NFC's No. 1 seed, but were eliminated by the Washington Commanders in the divisional round.

Some disgruntled Lions fans blamed offensive coordinator Ben Johnson and defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn for being more focused on interviews than their game plans.

Johnson accepted an offer to become Chicago's new head coach on Monday, two days after the Commanders beat the Lions 45-31. He interviewed with the Bears, Patriots, Jaguars and Raiders during Detroit's bye week.

Johnson's offense racked up 521 yards and scored 31 points so it wouldn't seem that he was too distracted to create an effective scheme for the game.

But Johnson made one big mistake. Down 10 with 12 minutes left in the fourth quarter, he called a trick play that ended with wide receiver Jameson Williams throwing an interception. Williams should've tucked the ball and run instead of throwing into coverage.

Fox broadcaster Tom Brady, who is a minority owner of the Raiders and was involved in interviewing Johnson, criticized the "gimmicky" play.

"Not a great time for a trick play," Brady said.

Johnson's trickery had some positive re-

sults, too.

Earlier in the game, Williams ran 61 yards for a touchdown on a double reverse. Also, running back David Montgomery completed a 20-yard shovel pass after taking a pitch from Jared Goff.

Glenn interviewed with the Bears, Jaguars, Raiders, Saints and Jets. He turned down an interview request from the Patriots, who hired Mike Vrabel.

His defense allowed 38 points and 481 yards to Washington. But the Lions were missing several key players and lost cornerback Amik Robertson in the first quarter. Johnson and Glenn weren't the only coordinators busy interviewing for head coaching jobs before a playoff game. They just happened to be on the wrong end of the biggest upset so far this postseason.

Meanwhile, Commanders offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury is waiting until after the season to take interviews so he can focus on the playoffs. Washington defensive coordinator Joe Whitt Jr. had his first interview with the Jets on Sunday.

Eagles OC Kellen Moore (Cowboys, Jaguars, Saints), Bills OC Joe Brady (Bears, Jaguars, Saints), Chiefs OC Matt Nagy (Jets) and Chiefs DC Steve Spagnuolo (Jets, Jaguars, Raiders) have also done interviews. Per NFL rules, assistants on playoff teams could only do virtual interviews. The league adjusted its rules this year, limiting interviews to three hours for coaches still alive in the playoffs.

Several assistants prepare for potential interviews in the offseason so they wouldn't have to start from scratch when they get a call.

"This go-around, I've been a lot more prepared for the types of questions that they've been asking," Johnson said last week about his third hiring cycle. □

Australian Open: Ben Shelton will face defending champion Jannik Sinner in the semifinals

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Ben Shelton's Australian Open quarterfinal foe, Lorenzo Sonego, produced the shot of the tournament diving to his left for a volley with so much spin that the ball bounced on one side of the net, then floated back over to the other but it was the American who ended up with the victory Wednesday.

The left-handed Shelton did some entertaining of his own, including earning cheers by doing a couple of push-ups after tumbling in the concluding tiebreaker, and he reached his second Grand Slam semifinal at age 22 by beating the



Ben Shelton of the U.S. falls during his quarterfinal match against Lorenzo Sonego of Italy at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025.

Associated Press

unseeded Sonego 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4).

"I'm relieved," said Shelton, who will meet No. 1 Jannik Sinner of Italy on Friday for a spot in the final. "Shout out Lorenzo Sonego because that was some ridiculous tennis."

Sinner, the defending champion at Melbourne Park, completely overwhelmed the last Australian in the men's bracket, No. 8 Alex de Minaur, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1 at night.

"It's been too many times playing him and seeing the same thing. So I'm not even surprised anymore when I face him," said de Minaur, who is now 0-10 against Sinner over their careers. "Matches like these happen."

Sinner looked and played much better than he did hand trembling, head dizzy during a four-set struggle against Holger Rune in the fourth round. After giving himself a bit of a break on Tuesday, sleeping in and only hitting on court for about 30 or 40 minutes, Sinner said his body was much better.

"For sure, was (my) best match of the tournament so far," said Sinner, who stretched his unbeaten winning streak to 19 matches dating back to last season.

Shelton, who is seeded 21st, closed the first set against Sonego with a 144 mph (232 kph) ace, tied for the fastest serve over the past 1 1/2 weeks, and flexed his left arm after smacking a powerful forehand to close a 22-stroke point and earn a break in the second. His father Bryan, a former tour pro who is Ben's coach, grinned, too, while patting his own right biceps.

A few points from the end, Shelton sprinted to get his racket on a seemingly unreachable ball, and fell into a court-side advertising board as Sonego hit an easy winner to take the point. Shelton stayed on the ground for a bit, then earned applause for his effort and post-fall calisthenics. □



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